

Canton Park Levy Synopsis

In order to move Canton forward, a work group known as the Canton Recreational Services Coalition is introducing a three phase proposal to create a full service park and recreation system that strives to be the best in the State of Ohio. For the past two years, representatives of this work group from the City of Canton, Canton Park Commission, Canton Joint Recreation District, Canton City Schools, J. Babe Stearn Community Center, and the Edward Peel Coleman Community Center have met regularly to discuss opportunities to improve collaboration and efficiency amongst the recreational providers in the city.

Phase One: Recently, this work group has come to the conclusion that the most effective way to maximize the resources of each entity is to pursue a three year park levy in the amount of four mills which (with Council approval) would be presented on the May of 2013 ballot and (with passage) take effect in January of 2014. The levy will allow the Canton Board of Park Commissioners to provide or assist with funding for the operations of the following entities:

- Canton's Park System and Facilities
- J. Babe Stearn Community Center
- Edward Peel Coleman Community Center

In addition to the operational funding, the levy will have the capacity to provide funding for capital projects and repairs for all three entity's facilities. To determine how these funds will be allocated, the Park System will initiate a full evaluation and needs assessment of each park / facility. In conjunction with this assessment, the Park Commission will work with City Council, Neighborhood Associations, and our citizens to prioritize how these capital funds will be spent at these parks and facilities.

During the discussions, the work group determined that there were several key areas that the levy will seek to improve:

- Collaboration of services and resources between all recreational providers
- Improved programming and recreational access for Canton citizens
- Providing new activities for youth, adults, and families in Canton
- Increased safety in park and recreational facilities
- Improved maintenance and upgrades to park and recreational facilities

Phase Two: Pending the passage of a May 2013 ballot initiative, the Canton Park System will facilitate partnership agreements between all of the participating recreational entities. They will also work to strengthen their relationship with the Canton Joint Recreation District with the purpose of creating an all inclusive, one-stop shop for all park and recreation needs.

Phase Three: With successful levy implementation and proper administration, the Coalition believes that this initiative will have a positive, transformative impact on the entire Canton community. Should the levy pass and the collaborative partnerships are established, the Coalition partners are committed to exploring a combined park and recreation levy in 2016 which would bring all park and recreation funding in the City under one organization.